

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our contemporary world happens to lack respect for environmental integrity. Yet as God's stewards, we should take good care of what God has created and entrusted to humanity. This should be by using and maintaining the environment in such a way that the earth; planet life, animals life and human beings can co-exist in a harmonious relationship that promotes God's gift to life.

In spite of being entrusted with the environment we live in, in terms of cultivating and looking after it. Mother nature has and continues to suffer destruction and exploitation.

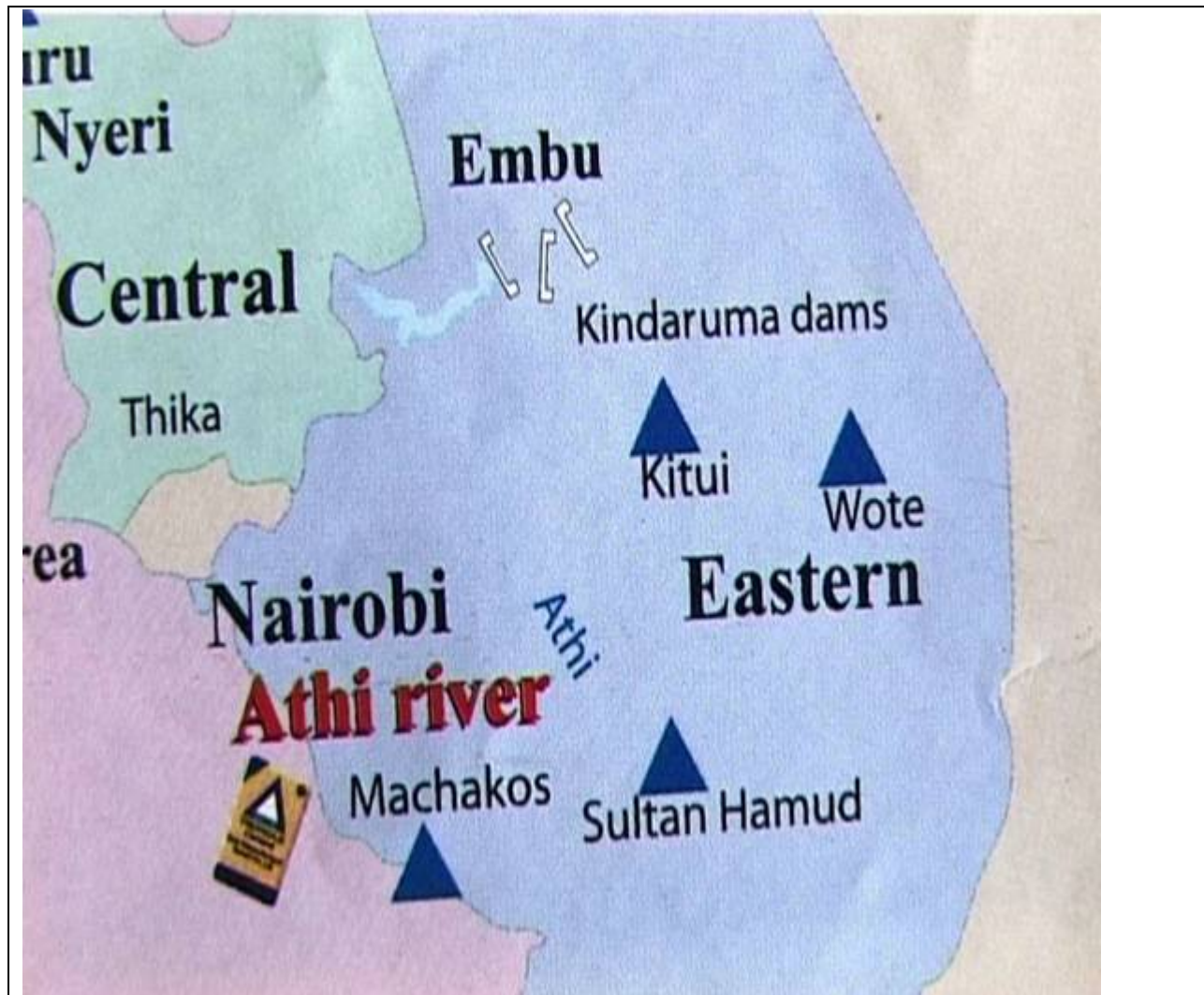
Apart from deforestation, soil degradation, pollution, climate change i.e. global warming etc. The oceans too are being polluted to the extent that soon it may not be able to support life anywhere. It is due to such global issues, that nations are beginning to realize that the problem of the environment cannot be solved by individual countries. In other words, we are bound to suffer together unless we work together and clean up the mess we are day in day out creating. This is where the unity of humanity is beginning to make sense. This means the problem that affect the whole planet can only be solved by international collaboration. Hence the need of taking a sensible and long term action.

Managing resources sustainably and to protect the environment within the context of tapping local knowledge for the conservation of the indigenous plants and trees is very much in line with our calling at Crafts of Africa and sister organization, People to People Tourism – Kenya. It is a calling that entails working closely with the locals i.e. the rural grassroots communities and mostly the artisans in Katangi Division of Machakos District and also some communities from Yatta Division of in Kitui District.

Crafts of Africa has a good grassroots network with carvers and artisans in these areas and indeed in other areas where we work in line with our mission of:

- enabling artisans to utilize their God given talents and creativity
- reducing unemployment through job creation and poverty alleviation
- personal motivation and dedication to indigenous crafts promotion
- enhancing craft marketing outlets and networks
- fostering eco-tourism
- promoting the social-cultural heritage of Kenya's people

Project Area of Focus: *The Kamba Land Community*



The Kamba community is found in Kenya's Eastern Province. It is a semi arid region with a fragile ecosystem. The Akamba belong to central Bantu sub-group which is the highland Bantu. They occupy five major vast districts namely: Machakos, Kitui, Makueni, Kibwezi and Mwingi. The three master groups that form the Akamba community include: Akilungu, Evaau and Athaisu. Their principal town is Machakos which was once proposed as Kenya's capital city. The town lies about 60 kilometres from Kenya's Capital City of Nairobi on the way to Mombasa.

The Crafts of Africa (COA) approach

Most highly esteemed institution and universities globally are research oriented. Whereas this is the truth one can still rightly argue that the importance of research is the most underrated function of many organization and even universities. In other words, shortage of good academic research is among the primary reason for our current underdevelopment in Kenya

and Africa at large. A sister problem to the above observation is the common trend of getting scholars or field practitioners to go into great length in unearthing important information in whatever field and the end result is marked with leaving such vital qualitative and quantitative information or discoveries to get dust in the shelves or in the libraries, homes, offices or in institution of higher learning. It is against this background that Crafts of Africa wants to make the best use of our findings as a sound base for sustainable utilization and conservation of our community's natural heritage and local knowledge.

In as far as COA approach was concerned we initially set ourselves to conduct scientific and non-scientific surveys, one was tilted more on scientific survey with the help of multiple choice questionnaire and the second option was basically a series of engaging the target community on one to one encounter across the 75 villages where COA's integrated development initiatives both in primary health care (PHC) and income generating activities are taking place i.e.

KYUA SUB LOCATION – KYUA LOCATION:	21Villages
MEKILINGI SUB LOCATION OF KATANGI LOCATION	10Villages
KATANGI SUB LOCATION – KATANGI LOCATION	11Villages
MAKUSYA SUB LOCATION – YATTA LOCATION – KITUI DISTRICT:	13Villages
SYOKISINGA SUB LOCATION – KYUA LOCATION:	20Villages.

In view of the vast areas to be covered we found the one to one field visit interviews, participatory group discussions and observations as opposed to questionnaire administration to be the prudent way to go. In order to make the whole exercise a success in a more practical approach, what we did was to involve the provincial administration and in this case the chiefs, the craft men and women artisan groups that COA works with as well as the local schools teachers and pupils and the community/villagers in general.

Tapping inputs and knowledge of the locals

Many a times projects have ignored the inputs and knowledge of the local peoples by adaptation of the top bottom approach or call it imposing "foreign ideas" on the community. That kind of a know it all approach to any community project or undertaking have as experience shows been the major recipe to projects failure. In order to avoid this kind of costly and resource wastage scenario, we opted as noted above to as much as possible make extensive visits to villages, hold local chiefs barazas, in addition to informal one to one "word of mouth" discussions or encounter. COA's participatory strategies were more people centred. This entailed trailing the locals who were I should say very resourceful and active from the word go.

When it came to using the chiefs, what we found to be more appropriate was to organize barazas i.e. local village meetings as some of the attached photos No's ----- shows.

Taking a Facilitator's role

The nature of partnership with the target communities meant that COA was only taking a facilitators role. In terms of providing for transport, organizing chief's barazas, in addition to

meeting other related cost. In the final analysis the approach yielded good results in that we not only enjoyed the company and trust of ordinary people out there in the villages but as we speak we have at hand knowledge of close to over twenty indigenous trees that are a potential source of environmental friendly dyes *“that Crafts of Africa team were not aware of and very much doubt if there is any scientific name tag on them”*. The other very important bit of information we learnt was that unlike the conventional dyes, the natural plant or tree dyes are according to the women artisans not toxic or harmful when the dust from the same is inhaled during the process of making or weaving the baskets

Local knowledge kept alive for future generation use

All cultures have their own wisdom, traditions. These are often expressed in tales, legends, myth, proverbs, sayings, riddles, songs etc. they are a way in which the traditions of peoples culture are kept alive and handed down to new generations. Originally through the oral tradition, later often through writings.

It is through such medium of communications, that in Africa so to speak, the young have from generation to generation been able to learn the wisdom of the elders. There is a certain intrinsic timeliness about them in that they do not go out of date. But today it often seems like our modern Africa is throwing away this richness. Unlike yester years, Africans do not listen anymore to the wisdom of their ancestors. For instance, what we often see in Kenya today is a restive hip- hop T.V entertainment generation that has no respect for taboos and culture. All this can be attributed to the external influence and other dynamics of development and social cultural change.

It is indeed a new trend that may with time erode what our ancestors passed on to us thus our rich heritage. The point is, the importance of African traditional values should not be uncritically abandoned in the name of modern civilization. In my view, African values have and should penetrate all areas. Such penetration of our value system involves seeking the local’s enlightenment on indigenous plant use which is indeed a core area of this project focus. On the same breath, if we want to keep growing, the best way to learn more is to pass on what we have already learned. Thus blessing others with the unearthed gift of knowledge be it indigenous or conventional. This is precisely what Crafts of Africa mission and vision is focused on.

Use of Oral traditions and writings.

For record, all the men and women in Kamba land who played a key role in helping Crafts of Africa team identify the coded plants and tree Reference Numbers:

01-COA-KYS-T, 02 COA-KLE-T, 03-COA-KTL-T, 04-COA-KKN-T 05-COA-KKU-T,

06-COA-ITL-T, 07-COA-IKU-T, 08-COA-KITH-T, 09-COA-KIS-T, 10-COA-KIV-T,

12-COA-AH, 13-COA-WL-T, 14-COA-NTH-T, 15-COA-C, 16-COA-MU.

Made it clear to us that this knowledge was passed on to them by their grandparents. It should have therefore originated from their – great grandparents who too in turn had gotten the same from their own ancestors. This tells us that, future generations will not forgive us if we fail to pass the same rich heritage to them and the next generation.

It is worth noting here that, the participants are in record of observing that this was the “first time ever” that they were seeing an organization taking an interest in the plants and trees that the locals have for ages used to extract dyes but unfortunately no one has taken an interest to document the same for posterity. It is to us – Crafts of Africa a new chapter that need a hand in enabling us to scientifically tag/document these plants.

As the work of this project takes us to the next Rufford funding level, there is a need to work side by side with an ecologist or botanist and other scientist in the related discipline and get to unearth which of the above plants and trees have any scientific name or a record. An establishment of this and documentation of the same is a crucial step forward. The carrying out of such an exercise would serve as an eye opener to lots of nature lovers and an eco-tourism where COA&PPT is active

Having the young learn the wisdom of elders.

In order to meaningfully pass on the knowledge learnt on the plant and tree dyes, what Crafts of Africa/People to People Tourism – Kenya, along with their project stakeholders did was to proactively facilitate the formation of an environment club at the Kavingo primary school in Kisesini – Kyua location of Katangi Division.

The children and the environment teacher in charge of the club are now actually involved in the collection of the seedlings of the dye tree and plants. In practical terms, this is one way of sensitizing our young ones/generation to take charge of their environment and pass the same values to the next and future generation. We do plan to include the environment club as part of our eco tourism People to People Tourism visitations in which each visiting tourist will be encouraged to plant trees as a mark of his/her solidarity with this project/initiatives to conserve indigenous dye plant/trees. This will be treated as part of promoting responsible tourism ideals/philosophy in line with PPT idea or concept of:

Vision

Revitalizing Kenya’s tourism industry by nurturing new and creating ideas through product diversification in collaboration with other stakeholders; locally, regionally and internationally.

Mission

- Promoting greater cross cultural understanding and international cooperation between peoples. Thus building bridges and breaking social barriers by giving visiting tourists a better perspective of the country visited and its people. This includes promoting love for nature and wildlife.

- Promote tours that are educative and promote a sensitive understanding of a traveller's responsibilities to culture within the countries that they are visiting.
- Promoting tour packages that help in easing the ever-increasing congestion on Kenya's beautiful and ecologically sensitive wildlife habitat. An aspect, which seems to be ignored by the existing tour operators.
- Undertake to produce responsible tourism materials and information as well as sharing the same with other stakeholders in the tourism industry. Therefore, PPT ideas/approach has the possibility of being used elsewhere.
- Tourism and crafts sector are inextricably linked. Understandably therefore, the PPT's excursions aims to give tourists and fair trade trading partners an opportunity of lending a hand towards self-help women/men artisan's efforts by buying reasonably priced high quality hand crafts. All this is done in the spirit of uplifting the socio-economic status of the impoverished communicates. Thus investing in the artisans/local people.
- Taking teams of people or volunteers to see grassroots development activities/initiatives and have them share their expertise skills, talents and ideas/vision with the host communities in line with the concept underlying the People to People Tourism idea.

Indigenous plants and seeds collection/bank

COA aim is to encourage the collection of as many indigenous plants and trees dyes seeds and pass the same to the community for purpose of planting them. This will be done through sensitization forums like in chief barazas i.e. local meetings, adult literacy class etc

In our view, the idea of educating and involving schools and indeed children on environmental matters will not only make them to potentially assume responsibility for planting indigenous trees but it is one way of creating an acculturated generation in the environmental front that has value for mother nature.

Since medicinal trees was beyond the scope of our project. All the same the World Health Organization (WHO) report shows that conventional medicine caters for only 30 percent of Kenya's population of 35 million people. This leaves 70% to traditional providers. The traditional providers/herbalist source of medicine is from trees and plants. Clearly therefore, we cannot overemphasize the importance of focusing all our energies and efforts in the environmental conservations. I am a strong believer of advocating the need to always educate and remind our children and ourselves that it is out of the ground that the lord God made various trees that are a delightful for the eyes to see, and good for food, medicine and of course dyes and lots of other things.

Tree planting and related conservation measures.

Forest cover worldwide is critically low and must be increased dramatically and quickly. In Kenya today, there is a high degree of concern due to the ever going on tree destruction. Kenya is a casualty of mass tree destruction. It is a state of an affair that has left Kenya with only 1.7% of forest cover against the internationally recommended standard of 10%.

As a grassroots oriented organization, Crafts of Africa concern is mainly in education and sensitization of the kind of people we work with. These are mainly the wood carving artisans/community mainly from the fragile eco system of the semi arid region of Kamba land. The ongoing initiative of this project on sensitizing the community on the need to plant more trees saw us mobilize carvers from the largest Kamba land wood carving cooperative society in Wamunyu where more than 4000 trees were planted. A similar exercise took place in Kisesini of Kyua location. All these efforts were not in vain because the trees are today doing very well. An impromptu – Ambush visit to homes of the carving community and the community in general of the groups that received the trees seedlings showed that they have been taking care of what COA distribute out for planting during its tree planting campaign.

Strategy

As part of COA sensitization strategy, what we did is to have the children from Nile Road Special School for the mentally and physically handicapped lead the tree planting exercise.

The theme/challenge was “if indeed mentally handicapped person can be able to plant, water and nurture a seedling” why not millions of able bodied persons. All what we are saying here is that with proper education our people can learn all the aspects of tree planting such as propagation, growth, management, harvesting, utilization, ecology and social cultural aspects.

This strategy was well put and when we sold the idea to the Hindu community in Kenya, more than 120 members of the BSS Hindu council as well as eco-total petrol dealers and other friends of COA/PPT were able to team up with us in the above exercises. The event was covered in the local media with the carvers/artisans wearing Rufford T-shirts. Please see photos attached No's.....

As part of our commitment to planting more trees, COA is open to unearthing and embracing more local ingenious strategies that will help in our effort to sensitize the community on the need to plant more trees and take care of mother nature. Such measures will therefore be employed as a tool to combat the rapid trees destruction of rare trees and especially those used for carvings. The most rare and popular trees with the carving community are Muhugu (*Brachylaena hutchinsii*) Ebony (*Dalbergia Melanoxylon*) Mvule (*Chlorophora exelsa*), Satinwood (*Fagara Macrophylla*) and Brown Olive (*Olea Africana*).

The Kamba community happen to dominate this trade i.e. wood carving industry. Hence our focus on Kamba land. The poverty level in Eastern province is at 51.1 percent according to the latest Kenya Integrated household budget survey of March 2007 clearly therefore we are

talking of a people who happen to come mainly from the poor segment of the Kenya society. All the same that should not be an excuse for nature destruction. Poor people often fight for their immediate social economic needs thus survival more important than conservation. That is one reason for the degradation in this area because firewood is their main energy source.

Hence the need to educate and encourage the community understand the need to plant sustainable but fast growing woodcarving trees like Jacaranda, Mango, Mwarubaine (Neem). More and more wood carving communities are being sensitized on this. But more needs to be done. Failure to educate the woodcarving community on the dangers ahead and the need to explore the alternative source of fast growing trees, the country and the world for that matter will stand to lose all our slow growing indigenous carving trees due to the high exploitation rate and slow regeneration of the same.

Presently the current records show that Kenyan woodcarving are worth more than 1.5 billion per year. The growth of this industry has been in terms of sales volume. It is estimated that there are 80,000 carvers currently active in this trade in the country with an extended family network estimated to over half a million people. This kind of a scenario or reality does therefore justify our concern for we are stake holders too in this industry. This is so because COA producer groups come from these regions.

As a fair trade organization and friends of nature, we are obliged to do something about the environment too in view of the products that we export both to fair trade organization and mainstream buyer in the western capitals of the world. In other word, the buyers or the consumers of these products too stand to be affected indirectly or directly on what takes place in a distant land i.e. Kamba land. This is so because there is no one who is an island unto himself when it comes to thinking globally and acting locally or conversely acting locally and thinking globally.

As an integral part of this project endeavours, our concerted efforts will not only enlighten the locals but we too are in the learning process as we get the golden opportunity of tapping the local knowledge for conservation. In the long run the give and take concept or approach to environmental conservation will help conserve bio-diversity significantly and improve the people's livelihood through the nature of educational aspects advocated by COA in the areas of social economic and water conservation. The incorporation of agro-forestry trees as already observed will provide the community with the much needed fuel wood.

Way forward and future action

As pointed out earlier, Crafts of Africa would like to closely work with Rufford and other like minded organizations or sponsors in moving these initiative to another level.

- Now that we have identified over (20) twenty potential environmental friendly tree and plant dyes for commercial use on the kiondo sisal basketry colouring etc we need to give this report the attention it deserves both from a professional and scientific front.

- When all is said and done what we need from this point on is to establish how many of the indigenous trees are known to the scientist community in the ecology or botanical world. The immediate establishment of this as a way of stopping bio-piracy of traditional local knowledge is crucial.
- This brings us too to the issue of the protection of intellectual property right of the unearthed local knowledge from the perspective of national and international levels. This is yet another area where we need some serious input and follow up from Rufford as we take this initiative to the next level.
- Crafts of Africa/People to People Tourism – Kenya team is in light of the foregoing keen to promote or enhance exchange of information linkages locally and internationally among relevant bodies on the subject at hand.
- Seek to further spread the net or our wings and get to unearth other local knowledge e.g. trees/dye plants from other regions where COA works with the grassroots communities i.e. the artisans. This calls for working with relevant authorities to press for the written documentation and conservation of the tree/plan dyes among others for their commercial benefit of the artisans and posterity. This will also require a proper coordination by the relevant authorities.
- Encourage and sensitize or educate women/men self help groups including youth groups to start their own tree nurseries and have the government support such initiatives. This is crucial if Kenya is to realize the internationally required 10% recommended standard of forest cover. This is one area where COA would need a substantial funding and more so if we are to play a more significant role now and in the years to come. This will be made possible by issuance of seedlings and necessary farm inputs at a subsidized rates.
- The current NARC Kenya government is very keen on tree planting. All the same there is need to lay a concrete base for effective participation on the part of all Kenyans and particularly the Kamba people where addressing tree loose issue is crucial to their survival in view of their dominant trade i.e. wood carving.
- The above measures are sound moves that can help in conservation of many rich plants and trees that are facing extinction. To counter this, there is a need for domestication and cultivation of the dye plants and trees.

I personally strongly feel that the youth are our future. As such mobilizing and encouraging young people to plant the foregoing noted indigenous plants and trees will help ensure continuity and right attitude to environmental conservation for our present good and for the posterity.

To that end therefore, there is need for financial support in making the above initiatives a reality on the way forward.